

# **Review of the RITC Pilot Mentorship Programme for Tobacco Control Researchers**

July 21, 2008

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### Mentors and mentees interviewed for the review

June 25/08	Raul Mejia/Jonatan Konfino Carlos Kummerfeldt
June 26/08	Denis Vinnikov Supriyati Joaquin Barnoya
June 27/08	Daisy Rattan/Chris Craigwell
June 30/08	Aichurek Burjubaeva

## **1. Background of the Mentorship Programme**

The Mentorship Programme was initiated in 2006 with the overall aim to “enhance the capacity” of a selected group of individuals from RITC’s Small Research Grants “to be tobacco control champions in their respective countries and regions, and through their role as mentors to stimulate a younger generation of researchers to become involved in tobacco control”.<sup>1</sup>

Following their selection, the first activity involved participation of the seven mentors in a preliminary training workshop in Niagara Falls: “Effective Mentoring in Global Health”<sup>2</sup>. At this event, each mentor developed a Personal Mentorship Improvement Plan (PMIP) which they were to begin immediately to implement. In March 2007, a second workshop in Buenos Aires focused on knowledge transfer and exchange and advocacy in tobacco control and tobacco control research (TCR), with mentors developing their Research for Action Plans and to proceed to develop and implement a research project (valued up to \$10,000) with a chosen mentee. A final workshop in Port-of-Spain, the Leadership Institute in Trinidad (LIT) in March 2008, focused on building leadership capacity among the mentors, “rolling up” the learning outcomes of the PMIP and RfAP activities and introducing mentees to the group as a whole. The LIT completed the cycle of major RITC Mentorship Programme inputs.

## **2. Purpose and Methods of the Review**

The Mentorship Programme proposal anticipated that the end of the pilot phase would “culminate in the launching of a formal mentorship training programme” that, over a 3-year period, would “have generated a cadre of trained mentors/leaders in tobacco control, as well as a significant cadre of new young researchers who will have become active in tobacco control research...”<sup>3</sup>.

As the Mentorship Programme wound down, however, it became somewhat less certain that this was necessarily the best way to proceed, particularly given the launching of the GHRI Leadership Programme and potential linkages and synergies that might be explored between that program and this mentorship program. Toward exploring options, therefore, the decision was taken to conduct a relatively light-handed stock-taking review of the viability and effectiveness of the Mentorship Programme from the perspective of the mentors and mentees: what they felt was achieved and why, and what they considered important as “next steps” for themselves and for RITC in pushing further ahead the goal of creating stronger TCR cadres.

Specifically, the TORS aimed at developing “an understanding of mentor and mentee impressions of the Mentorship Programme” and, from these, to offer:

- reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of the Mentorship Programme as well as the utility of the Leadership Institute (LIT) as a capacity building mechanism for building leadership competencies among mentorship participants; and

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<sup>1</sup> International Tobacco Control Grants Application 2007-8: 3

<sup>2</sup> All of the activities were developed and implemented jointly by RITC and the Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research (CCGHR)

<sup>3</sup> International Tobacco Control Grants Application 2007-8: 12

- recommendations on programme structure and content to inform the future development of a 3-year mentorship programme for tobacco control researchers.

The original design of the review involved attendance at the LIT and observation of activities there to determine the effectiveness of the Institute “as a vehicle for leadership training and development”. In the event, this travel did not happen and the extent to which LIT effectiveness is assessed here is limited to reflections of mentors and mentees who attended.

The original design also intended data being generated through individual and group interviews with mentors and mentees at the LIT. Again, that did not happen and mentors and mentees were instead interviewed by phone<sup>4</sup>. While this method proved reasonably successful in terms of eliciting respondents’ perspectives on their experience, it was obviously much more limited than sustained face-to-face conversations would have been and, to this extent, the analysis of the review is somewhat limited.

In preparation for the interviews, the Mentorship Programme files and progress reports were reviewed with respect to the background, inputs, implementation processes and outcomes of the initiative as reflected through exchanges between RITC and the dyads. While these data guided the interviews and informed the following analysis, they are well known to RITC already and so are not repeated as such here<sup>5</sup>.

### **3. Risks of Mentorships as a TCR Capacity Strategy**

As will be discussed in the next section, the overall picture of mentorship emerging from the nine interviews was a very consistent one:

*Mentorship is organic and person-specific. It is a personal-cum-professional relationship between two people based on mutual respect, shared commitment to a set of values and joint responsibility for working toward the goal of integrating the mentee into a profession; and doing so through incremental stages that are at once flexible and structured. It is a way of teaching and learning that is not right for every teacher and learner; and a modality not readily amendable to orchestration on demand.*

In this respect, for a funder such as RITC attempting at a geographical and institutional distance to generate research and leadership capacity through the mentorship modality is a relatively risky strategy. Much more than other “contracted” arrangements<sup>6</sup>, establishing and growing any one mentorship -- and certainly a set of them -- in the direction intended by a project must ultimately be tentative, dependent on the unique characters and joint motivation of the two people involved. A perspective common to all interviews was that reflected in the points made by two of the mentors:

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<sup>4</sup> Two dyads were not interviewed. References to mentor and mentee opinions throughout this review include, therefore, only those who were interviewed.

<sup>5</sup> In particular, while some of the results identified in this present report reflect those included in the files, those from the file as such are not repeated here.

<sup>6</sup> For example, seminar series, tutorships or research assistantships.

“Mentoring is tricky; people may not always be able to accomplish what you expect them to, they might not stay in the (TCR) field, for example”.

“A mentorship is not like a regular teacher and student relationship. There will always be a risk because it can go wrong after you’ve invested time in them. A mentorship is an investment in a person” rather than a fixed mechanism as such<sup>7</sup>. “More of the mentor’s own professional credibility as well as time is invested; and sometimes a mentee chooses a different life from where I guide them”<sup>8</sup>.

At the same time, the interviews also showed that the risks can be mitigated through the careful selection of proven mentors and the creation of enabling conditions. Of these two, the consensus was that mentor selection is typically the easier to realize, reasonably straightforward and readily managed.

Creating conducive conditions is more difficult, however, because a mentoring relationship will invariably be uncertain for some time as the mentee is confirmed and the chemistry between the two is proven through practice. Because the viability of a mentorship, according to one, “cannot really be evaluated ahead of time”, the most critical condition from the perspective of a funder is flexibility, both in managing the timing and nature of support and in making adaptations when a first try doesn’t work out.

A number of more specific ways were suggested or implied by the interviews toward minimizing the risk of failing arrangements to both RITC and prospective dyads.

- Emphasize selection criteria for well-experienced mentors with a track record of finding the right people as mentees and building viable relationships, or at least the expectation that they can do so based on their own experience as mentees<sup>9</sup>;
- Be clear about the “admission requirements” of the programme with respect to the related but distinct expectations of both the substantive outcomes (e.g. TCR research related) and creating a genuine mentoring process.
- Encourage experienced mentees to recommend other potential mentee candidates based on their knowledge of the TCR field and a candidate’s professional interests as directly and indirectly relevant to that; what it means to be in a successful mentoring relationship and a candidate’s fit both with that and with the particular character of the mentor.

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<sup>7</sup> If the current Mentorship Programme were to evolve into one of action to institutionalize mentoring programmes in different countries, it might be considered a mechanism from RITC’s perspective in the broad sense of an intervention strategy. Even in this case, however, while the general dimensions of such a macro mechanism would be fixed e.g. criteria for mentor and mentee selection and their research support, the actual dyads would need to continue in the form of “relationships”.

<sup>8</sup> All of the quoted references in this text are to be read as paraphrases of what was said, using as many of the exact phrases and terminology as possible to ensure accuracy of the overall meaning, but editing and adding where necessary to make the written text clear and more complete.

<sup>9</sup> According to one mentor, this would also be a way to make the selection process more transparent, and avoid any RITC researchers not chosen as mentors feeling slighted.

- Identify existing mentoring teams **where possible, as well as trying to create new ones**, but then enabling them to extend their relationship through provision of resources and training to “let us do better, more formally, what we are already doing informally and with a particular focus on tobacco”.
- Establish from the outset an outcome mapping plan with mentors and their mentees, including agreed outcomes and progress markers for both the mentee’s learning and for the relationship *per se*. As one mentor noted, “mentorships don’t fail as much as fade away. At some point in the process, the mentee loses energy and I suggest he goes elsewhere”. This implies a loss of time for both those involved and RITC that could be reduced by knowing if, when and how adaptation or withdrawal and a new start is appropriate.

#### **4. Analysis of the Interview Data**

The following discussion is, in effect, the data underlying the brief preceding analysis. It looks at the experience of the Mentorship Programme in terms of various dimensions from the perspective of the mentors and mentees. Each was asked about the nature of mentorship; about its **strengths/benefits and weaknesses/challenges** as a strategy for developing TC research professionals and potential leaders [as distinct from other one-on-one approaches]; and about what particular characteristics of the process made it work for them, **or not**.

##### ***4/a Mentor and mentee understanding of what mentorship means***

There was strong agreement across all respondents that the essence of mentorship is one of **mutual commitment** and **shared responsibility**. Unlike other training arrangements, a mentorship is not simply an instrumental association between an expert and a learner to transmit a pre-determined set of knowledge and skills or complete a task. Rather, it is a holistic relationship between mentor and mentee in which they both agree to collaborate in the development of the mentee as a fully-rounded professional.

*Mentor Perspectives* Mentorship for the mentors involved “not just the mechanics of doing research, but also counselling on how to start a career”. Mentees are usually at a crossroads, at the end of one stage of their professional development and about to embark on the next and so “they are interested in their future direction, how to move forward”, not just in getting more information. A mentoring relationship makes sense at this moment because it assumes open-ended and flexible guidance: learner-centred, responsive and expansive. A mentorship relationship is, necessarily, one of accommodation.

This does not imply that mentorships are seen as completely unstructured. For these mentors, the relationship works because, and when, the dyad comes together under the auspices of common professional interests and shared values; in the case of RITC, both mentors and mentees shared mutual commitments to issues of health and research directly related - or at least relatable - to tobacco control. Unlike a researcher-research assistant relationship, however, the shared “umbrella” is necessarily a broad one, mentors in agreement that the relationship must be -- and in their cases has been -- one

in which mentees have been allowed to feel their way. “We discussed options of a focus at the outset”, and while the mentee was happy with TCR, “it was quite open”<sup>10</sup>.

“The mentee is the responsible person behind the activity. As a mentor, I had to step back. He came to me, he was interested and I had a project which he was able to join. So when the mentorship came, it was a perfect fit for the both of us; he could shift easily into the project, doing the data collection, analysis, writing up. He ran his own agenda”.

“A mentorship is different (from tutoring) because while it is motivated by my desire, as a mentor, to pass on my knowledge and skills, this is only where our interests are in common”<sup>11</sup>. The mentee needs to be committed to acquiring the knowledge that I have”. The mentorship is then tailored “to the attributes the mentee brings, to those we both want to bring out in him and to how best to do that”.

*Mentee Perspectives*                      Mentee views were consistent with their mentors, perhaps a reason why these particular arrangements have worked so well. The consensus opinion among them was of mentoring as a particular form of facilitated learning partnership, “a closer relationship, beyond just work; (my mentor) is like a good friend”; “it is like having a role model”<sup>12</sup>. Mentoring to them combines three kinds of support: strong professional training, in this case on the techniques of research; opportunities for expanding their horizons through new experiences, in this case mentors promoted teaching, publishing and networking with senior scientists, including especially their own; and personal advice on how to grow as a professional, “how to interact with people, even how to dress appropriately”.

“It is more than tutoring and being a research assistant because you receive professional advice for career development besides the learning experience. Small things that make a difference, such as answering e-mails as soon as possible, being able to present a topic and easily transmit your ideas, and speaking in simple words are things you don't learn in school or as a teaching assistant or tutor”.

Mentees agreed, too, that it is a relationship where “basically, the mentee controls the agenda”. While it may have been “partly fixed, because it was a research project, unexpected things came up and I could influence these in terms of my interests” - things like data collection, lines of analysis, tools.

#### **4/b      *Mentor and mentee understanding of what makes a good mentor***

According to mentor-reported reflections from the Buenos Aires workshop, “... to be an effective mentor, one requires enhanced skills in areas such as negotiation, inter-personal communication, networking and advocacy to foster relationships, motivate the next generation of medical students or other graduates to become interested in pursuing

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<sup>10</sup> Based on the sense of the interview, the mentee was expected to focus the research on a tobacco control-related issue, but the particular question was up to the mentee to decide. It was not as totally open-ended as this comments perhaps makes it sound.

<sup>11</sup> The sense of the comment was that the interest had to be shared - the mentor wanting to pass on her knowledge, but the mentee needing to have an interest in receiving this knowledge.

<sup>12</sup> According to RITC, mentorship within the context of the Mentorship Programme involves not simply the mentor providing a role model, but also taking action in the other two “leadership circles”. Interviews with mentors and mentees did not imply this wider vision; rather, mentoring for them seemed the principal intent of the Programme.

research careers, and to build coalitions or multidisciplinary teams”<sup>13</sup>. Based on the interviews, these continue to be the principal capacities associated by both sides of the relationship with good mentoring.

Interestingly, the consensus among mentors was that the *tendency* to mentor is inborn, not bred; a reflection of an inherent interest in, and ability to, communicate and share knowledge. “No, you can’t really create a mentor; it’s innate. Someone has to like to do it, to like teaching, bringing people in, engaging with learners”. “I would say mentors are born; some people have the capacity and interest; others don’t”.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, there was also a consensus that it is possible, and important, to explore, extend and hone one’s mentoring capacities; that the tendency to be a mentor does not necessarily produce a good mentor unless the motivation is expressed through continuous reflective application. In this sense, mentors also suggested that “being a good mentor” is not so much taught as internalized through experience; through being exposed first hand through the role modelling of another mentor. “If someone has the inclination, they learn best to be a good mentor from their mentors, to learn what it is and what it is not” through what worked or not for themselves as a mentee.

One implication of this is that the development of mentoring capacity is best done both through having access to facilitated opportunities to mentor and be mentored and opportunities to reflect on the experience. Both of these the current Programme was seen as having done to a reasonably good extent.

→ In this respect, it is worth noting that at least one mentor felt he had not learned enough about the mechanics of how the other dyads had worked with respect to the strengths, weaknesses and processes of the actual mentoring. “We didn’t really share that experience. I had certain procedures with (my mentee), but I don’t know if the others had a formal process” or how they assessed their experience. The extent to which there was not sufficiently extensive discussion within the group as a whole as to what was working or not in the respective creation, growth and management of their TCR mentorships suggests a possible gap in the Programme’s design with respect to knowledge generation and capacity development.

#### **4/c     *Mentor and mentee understanding of what makes a good mentee***

There were fewer comments made by either mentors or mentees pertaining to the characteristics of a good mentee, beyond the assumption of a good academic base on which to build new learning and being in a “moment of readiness” for exploring new ideas. Most criteria were implied rather than stated, and reflected relatively intangible matters of attitude.

For one mentee, it was important “to be committed to what you want to do” and for another, “to be interested and motivated” because, again for both, there was a cost in mentorship arrangements, as well as a value” they take time and

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<sup>13</sup> RITC. 2007. Capacity Building in Global Health Research for Developing Country Tobacco Control Researchers to Support Ratification, Implementation and/or Enforcement of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Buenos Aires, Argentina, from March 26-30/07: 2

<sup>14</sup> See footnote 23 page 15

attention, and they require a certain degree of self-exposure in allowing the mentor to comment not just on one's academic work but also on one's presentation of self as a professional.

All of the mentees saw themselves, and were seen by their mentors, as successful. Consistent with this, it was not surprising that all mentees also confirmed in one way or another that by being motivated, clear as to their own goals and confident in their sense of self, they had held their own in the face of strong mentors, remained open to the new ideas their mentors brought, found the time needed to gain skills and make use of advice, and effectively managed most risks to their personal space.

#### **4/d    *Mentor and mentee descriptions of how the mentorship worked for them***

Overall, based on comments from both mentors and mentees, the Mentorship Programme has been successful in realizing its objective of promoting and fostering leadership capacities in the field of TCR. While this was true for both sides of the dyad arrangement, it was especially so for the mentees for whom it was reflected *prospectively* in their enhanced potential to become leaders. For the mentors, it was more in confirming and strengthening themselves as capable mentors<sup>15</sup>.

*Mentee Perspectives*            On the part of the mentees, major outcomes included changes with respect to improvements in their knowledge, skills and self-confidence as tobacco control researchers and, with further work, their stronger potential as leaders, whether in TCR or in some other area of health onto which they might go<sup>16</sup>.

For one, the goal of creating TCR leaders “had worked” by strengthening his application for admission to further studies; in this way, it “helped me accomplish my mid-term objective of getting good clinical training with specialized tools for research”, statistics, research report writing, teaching. With this base, and through access to the mentors of his mentor, he was already “starting to build my own network of research contacts”. Others said much the same:

“I would definitely like to do this mentoring Programme again. This has been something very critical in my own development as a health professional...since I lacked a formal experience in research -- there was none while I did medical school. So I would love to do it again, and would definitely like to try to be somebody else's mentee, though I still have a long way to become a mentor myself”.

It has been “a wonderful experience, learning how to build more than just a professional relationship with (my mentor), or new skills, but also how to introduce myself into the research environment”.

“I am clearer now that I want to do work in tobacco control; to continue to be involved in research, but also to do more in terms of policy because that is more relevant to solving the problem in the country of tobacco consumption”. With the mentorship, “I will be

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<sup>15</sup> All of the mentors saw being a good mentor as a quality of leadership, at least in the private or small L sense discussed on page 18.

<sup>16</sup> While it could not be said that all the mentees would go into TC, it would be fair to say they all had an enhanced sensitivity to issues and none dismissed the possibility of staying in the field.



stronger in helping develop activities to implement the law (aimed at protecting people from tobacco smoke) that is still only on paper”.

With respect to the future, two mentees noted they would definitely stay in TCR, at least for the near-term. One was beginning a fellowship to develop and test a tobacco cessation programme; another was intending to continue to work through the mentorship to develop leadership skills in TC policy. While a third was less certain about a future in TCR, he would be staying in health research “in some way”, first having to become “more competent in clinical medicine”, but then trying to combine research and clinical medicine “because in this country, you cannot live on research alone; you need to have a clinical practice”.

Like the comment of one above, most mentees confirmed that they would also be trying to become mentors themselves as they continued to evolve as professionals. In various ways, they each expected to improve their skills for this mostly informally: through their own learning as mentees; through the teaching they were doing as part of the mentorship practice; and through facilitating new members of their mentors’ project teams.

*Mentor Perspectives* For mentors, the changes were less dramatic, but nonetheless important. All reported a reinforced recognition of mentorship as a viable strategy for building the TCR community in their countries and institutions. All believed they had strengthened their existing capacities to make successful mentorships happen: as better communicators, negotiators and facilitators of learning. All expected to continue to be mentors, and intended to try to institutionalize the arrangement in some way in their home institutions<sup>17</sup>.

For one mentor, a significant and specific outcome was in how he now understood the leadership-mentoring nexus - an understanding, he believed that had strengthened the quality of his application for a Global Health Leadership Award, an award he ultimately won.

For others, the outcomes were somewhat less tangible, but similarly important.

Having been exposed to more ideas on mentoring from the workshops and the literature review, both of which emphasized a “more liberal approach to teaching”, one felt he was “a better mentor now”, more able to “change the conservative, hierarchical and unilateral culture” of his institution and to develop a “bilateral relationship” with his mentee to one “where both of us are taking the initiative”. While noting that the experience had not really changed his mentorship style, which “has always been to be open”, it had reinforced it and given him new insights into ways of doing it better.

For another, working through the mentorship had been a “good learning process. You never know where the road will lead” on a Programme like this, “but it was a good initiative on the part of RITC; very beneficial in opening us up in many ways to both mentoring and research, but especially to mentoring...”

To a third, the Programme had been a “very great advantage” in her role as both mentor and also as mentee. Through her improved language and communication skills, as well as knowledge of TCR generally, it had made her “more positive about (her) own

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<sup>17</sup> See Conclusions section with respect to institutionalization as a possible “next step”.

potential” for mentoring her colleagues in the future; for taking action to improve the poor collaboration among those working in TC; and for convincing NGOs to take up the TC cause. Through her stronger skills in networking and engaging the media, she expected to use her research dissemination workshop more expressly as an outreach and coordination forum.

In the fourth case, the Programme had expanded her “insights into a wider range of cross-cultural mentoring strategies and approaches”; and provided her a wider knowledge of TC measures that she was now using to develop training programmes for health care professionals in the country; in preparing a proposal for integrating TC into the training programme of the Health Promotion Department; and in discussions with the Ministry of Health in its development of legislation pursuant to the country’s FCTC ratification.

There were also somewhat more serendipitous outcomes. In one case, as the mentee had ended his programme, he sought out potential “replacement mentees”, graduate students compatible with his mentor’s research interests and professional style. According to an appreciative mentor, “he did a kind of initial screening”, carefully talking separately with several possible candidates, and as a result “the person I eventually selected looks very good, enthusiastic about research and getting into TCR. So when we get funding, we can formalize a mentorship”.

This kind of onward selection process, with former mentees playing a recognized, albeit informal, role was considered by this mentor and others as a potential way forward in finding appropriate dyad matches; especially as institutions begin to consider establishing formal mentorship programmes. In his case, it was also leading the mentor to consider the idea of specifically including mentoring skills in future mentees’ programmes, aimed at more systematically encouraging a “mentoring of mentors” process.

In another case, the mentor’s strengthened confidence in her communication and negotiating skills had enabled her to initiate a presentation on the Mentorship Programme to a workshop of her Nursing Fraternity, proposed by her as a way of guiding their deliberations on beginning a mentoring programme. On the success of that presentation, she was now developing a proposal for a more expansive pilot programme, including research support.

→ In two of the cases where progress of the mentorship had fallen short of RITC’s expectations it was not possible to have interviews with the mentors or mentees concerned as to why the mentorship evolved as it did or what, from their perspectives, had been achieved. In the third case, however, while the mentor acknowledged not yet fully reaching her own or RITC’s goals, she felt that she had nonetheless made “good progress” in realizing her aim of creating in herself the potential for [capital L leadership through the relevant mentoring skills she had begun to acquire in, for example, outreach, communication, negotiation, counselling.](#)

#### **4/e    Mentor and mentee assessment of why the mentorship worked for them**

Both implicitly and explicitly, mentors and mentees suggested a number of factors that had influenced the success of the Mentorship Programme, for them individually and for the initiative as a whole. Across all dyads, there was considerable consistency as to what these factors were, and among those factors considerable synergy. Overall, the picture was one of a strongly congruent Programme in the sense that inputs/activities (workshops, materials, funding for the research) provided by RITC and the CCGHR matched well the research contexts and priorities of the various mentors and mentees involved<sup>18</sup>.

**Organic Growth**      By whom and how the mentoring relationship was initiated did not appear to have made a difference to the ultimate nature or quality of the arrangement; these rested instead with how the specific relationship had evolved. While the various starting points and processes were different, the consensus opinion was that positive outcomes had been enabled because the relationships were allowed, by RITC and the mentors, to evolve rather than being rigorously predetermined or preconditioned. For both mentors and mentees, openness and patience were highly valued as enabling criteria, necessary conditions for ensuring that both could, in their own time, become clear about and implement their respective and shared tasks of the relationship.

**Readiness**            As noted above, the mentees were typically entering a new stage of their professional development, and moving into research as part of that. As such, they were at a moment of being ready either to create, or to make good use of, the opportunity to engage with a senior researcher they considered to be strong in terms of reputation and status. As one mentor described his mentee, “he was ready to take up new ideas; to absorb the innovative approaches I suggested”. Other mentors said much the same.

On their side, most mentors were similarly ready to be engaged. All had had positive formal and informal experiences with mentorship, at different times both as mentor and mentee. As the latter, most maintained a relationship with their former mentors, albeit now in a more collegial relationship. All but one mentor expressed self-confidence in their professional capacity and credibility as researchers. All but one confirmed having sufficient professional space within their institutions to make decisions, reach out and manage the opportunities and constraints of the environment in ways that supported their mentees’ development; the relationship; and the research exercise. Where these readiness characteristics had not obtained, the mentorship had faltered.

**Relevance**            All of the mentors confirmed the relevance of the Programme to the situation of TC and TCR in their own contexts, from both a health perspective and a capacity development one. Lack of capacity and co-operation within the tobacco control and research communities, with a few researchers working in isolation from one another and with limited access to research funding, expertise and tools were noted in all cases

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<sup>18</sup> Based on the sense of the interviews, the mentors did not see the Programme as a two-staged one of (i) initial support to enhance their mentoring skills as a means to (ii) the broader end goal of their improved leadership capacity. As discussed in the Conclusion, mentors appeared to see the mentorship as the core of the Programme with all activities aimed at making that work.

as conditions making a programme aimed at building capacities for bringing people, resources and knowledge together especially pertinent.

All except one of the mentors presented themselves, and were recognized by their mentees, as senior in both professional and institutional terms; they were TCR leaders certainly in their respective communities, and in some cases beyond them. All of them expressed confidence as mentors based on successful past experiences. All of them noted the relevance of the Programme to their own priorities in moving the TCR agenda forward, and to their understanding of mentoring as a viable and important way of doing this i.e. building the leadership potential of the mentees as professionals through the transfer of knowledge and skills. There was not a strong sense that they saw their own “capital L” leadership capacity strengthened *per se*.<sup>19</sup>

Mentees learning goals appeared to be set within fairly broad parameters of developing themselves as professionals within their fields, beyond a subject specialty or technical skill *per se*. The qualities of their mentors were directly relevant to this end insofar as they were perceived as having strong reputations as respected professionals: solid research backgrounds, good public profiles and broad network bases. These appeared more important as criteria for a mentee in choosing and feeling comfortable with a mentor than his/her disciplinary expertise as such.

To a considerable extent, these multiple ways in which the Programme and the mentors were relevant to each other had enabled both the mentors -- and, in turn, their mentees - - to take the time and make the effort needed to get the work done despite the fact that “time demands have been high”. For one mentor with limited opportunities to teach in his research institution, “by allowing me to do both research and teach, the Programme has been as good as it gets, good for my own professional research career and good for my goal of generating a pool of TCR knowledge and expertise within the context here”.

→ It was a base of relevant capacity that has also been crucial to enabling RITC to design and manage an appropriately “hands off” programme: one that has provided the occasion for leadership-oriented mentoring to happen, but in a sufficiently loosely-structured way to allow each arrangement to find its own way.

### ***Learner-Centred Mutuality***

Consistent with this, and the definition of mentorship expressed by the dyads, all of the relationships were described in some way as having been “learner-centred”. The mentees were, ultimately, the ones who agreed to do it and had to feel motivated through and for it. According to one mentor, perhaps the most teaching-oriented of the group but essentially the most reflective of them all, the key has been in

“understanding where the mentee is, and what is needed to take him from there to where he wants to be. You, as mentor, may not have all the knowledge or skills needed to meet these learning goals, so you have to be able to network, to reach out to others who have the required capacities to complete the whole of the learning plan”.

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<sup>19</sup> Although this question was not expressly asked. Rather, the question was a more opened-ended one: What have been the main changes for/in you as a result of the mentorship experience? Becoming a stronger public leader was not among their answers.

At the same time, the mentorships have not been one-sided; both sets of respondents put considerable emphasis on the fact that the relationships grew on the basis of a mutual willingness to be actively committed and ready to learn and develop. According to one mentee, there has to be “a chemistry between mentor and mentee”, and in his case, there has been. Both must be motivated and committed, ready to explore what will work best for building the mentee as a “professional whole”, including self-awareness, interpersonal and presentational skills.

According to one mentor, mentorship “needs some structure, with each of us putting something forward as our own part”. One of the mentees said much the same:

“The mentorship is unlike a researcher and a research assistant or even two colleagues working together because “we are responsible for each other” and “so the two of us develop, not just one...(My mentor) coached and guided me on what to do and how to it, mostly in the research, but also on things like communication and negotiation” and, through this “I think he increased his skills in coaching and guiding in a way that matched with what I needed”. On the other side, as the mentee, “I needed to show that I was making use of the knowledge he was giving by getting good results”; and both of them together “developed organizational skills” by managing the mentorship structure”.

***Time, Intensity and Structure*** All respondents in one way or another referred to the importance of sufficient opportunity for interaction between mentor and mentee to agree, work through and complete a mentoring agenda; to explore interests, priorities, talents and options. How much was sufficient clearly depended on the people and tasks involved, but none of the mentorships here presented an image of the kind of “move things along quickly” mentality that often hurts tutoring and research assistantships.

On the contrary, the dyads appeared to have had the room to do what they set out to do, in the way they determined to do it. One mentor noted needing another year “beyond RITC support and the research project” to accomplish the learning outcomes set with the mentee, but did not consider this a negative. Rather, it meant for her the opportunity to add to the mentee’s capacity to serve the wider health system.

In terms of format, all of the dyads built their mentor/mentee interactions around a core structure, typically weekly or bimonthly meetings, research and reporting activities and/or teaching tasks -- in all cases, structure of some kind seen as a necessary condition of success. At the same time, all of the dyads have balanced a more formal arrangement with the clear understanding that less structured, more spontaneous interactions were expected and welcome; so, too, was seeking out other professional development opportunities in the form of networking, workshops, training.

#### ***4/f Mentor and mentee assessments of the support/inputs from RITC***

Overall, the consensus opinion of the mentors was that the role of RITC has been one of significant added value in enabling the mentors to do better what they were doing anyway by expanding their mentoring skills and horizons, and to do so in mentee-centred ways. As expressed by one, but a common theme for most, “because we were specifically exploring different ways of mentoring, in addition to doing it within our own

culture, we had a realistic first hand view from a cross-cultural perspective. This broadened our knowledge of the nature of mentorship interaction”.

The funding of flexible research projects provided a critical structure around which each particular mentorship could build. “The way the research project was left open” was important because “it allowed me to bring people together” in a relevant way. For another, “the approach worked well from a development and a developing country perspective. There was a dramatic change in (my mentee’s) thinking” about TC and research because the project made sense “in the context and so could challenge him” in a relevant way.

Equally important, has been the peer exchange; “the funding would not have meant that much without also the chance to meet TCR researchers from the other regions, to learn from them how we could improve our own leadership and mentorship practice and let them learn from us. Seeing these others, really improved my understanding of both mentorship and leadership”.

For the mentor who was most new to the field, the Programme “has given me what I needed; I needed a lot of help with skills in research methodology, in writing proposals and analysis and I was always asked what I wanted to learn.” Though still difficult for her, these were skills she saw as “improved” because of the guidance from both RITC and the other mentors.

**The Workshops** Support to the workshops, mentors felt, enabled them to enhance and add to existing mentorship knowledge and skills and to move more effectively toward their goals of generating more competent and self-confident professional TC researchers. There was general agreement among them as to what the focus of each event was and that all three were important to do.

- While “they were not extremely helpful, they were all certainly helpful”<sup>20</sup>.
- “All three were important, not just for the mentorship or leadership discussion, but because of the different ideas on the methodology of the TC process. This was very important in terms of the role of research and of researchers in the field”.
- “They were all very effective” in terms of knowledge, cross-cultural perspectives, shared experience; and “they flowed well from one to the other”.
- All three served to “build up my own network”.

The **Trinidad Leadership Institute** stood out for both mentors and mentees for two reasons: the introduction of leadership as a core sub-text of the mentorship initiative overall; and the inclusion of the mentees, which provided the venue through which “the knowledge and skills of the other two institutes could be passed on” by the mentors. For several of the mentors, in fact, the main outcome of the LIT was the engagement of the mentees:

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<sup>20</sup> Emphasis in the original comment

“Trinidad was especially positive because it involved the mentees and that was particularly energizing” in giving the mentor and his mentee a chance to see each other’s practice: “I could serve as a role model for the mentee in terms of networking and presenting myself as a professional” and “confirm the quality” of the mentee in how he presented his research, “and give him feedback and guide him in how to network”.

Synergistically, it was the mentees themselves who spoke most about the leadership-oriented learning they acquired there<sup>21</sup>.

#### *Mentor Perspectives*

The mentors’ responses to the focus on leadership in Trinidad were generally positive, though not uniformly so. With respect to the first: “if the Institute had not introduced the idea of leadership, it would not have been clear where we could go next. We couldn’t discuss mentorship endlessly. So leadership here showed progress, forward movement”. Another agreed, and would have preferred in fact that there had been a less content-filled agenda, with more time to “assimilate the ideas about leadership, to reach closure on some of them” rather than now having to follow-up on their own “what leadership will mean in our country plan”.

Another, however, would have preferred less time on these discussions; “I’m not sure you can teach someone to be a leader; you become a leader through mentoring....More exchange on the kinds of results people were getting from their research” would have been better as a way to move that side of the Programme further ahead than had, in fact, been the case.

The fact of the heterogeneity of the group was recognized by most, however, as a factor that could not have been avoided, and that this had meant, reasonably enough, that none of their needs could be fully met. According to one, but reflected also by one or two others, it was clear at the Institute that some needed specificity and guidance, while others preferred a more opened-ended “design-as-you go” approach. “We each have a different background, levels of expertise, objectives. While the reflection time was good for me, others probably needed more structured input, focused on skills training for research or for mentoring. This is perhaps why not all of the research projects were approved or completed; and so the research productivity of the whole exercise was not very good”.

Related to this, there were also different perceptions as to how much input they, as mentors, had had into the design and content of the workshops. For one, the events “were built around our inputs, moulded around our interests”, something he felt was important in making them effective. On the other hand, another noted that he had had no input, although he did not see this to have been a particular deficiency because as he and the rest agreed, the agendas were reasonably flexible, with sufficient time for exchange. All expressed generally positive opinions about the interactive management style of the organizers, and the duration of the events<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Overall, the tone of the interviews with mentors suggested that the LIT had been informative with respect to leadership issues, but not mind-opening in the same kind of catalytic way mentees found it.

<sup>22</sup> The 5-day workshop appeared to be “just right” for most: long enough to get into the issues and to network with one another, but short enough not to be too long away from work.



*Mentee Perspectives* Not surprisingly, relatively few comments came from the mentees as to RITC inputs since most of their experience of the Programme was through the professional support, facilitation and networking opportunities provided by their respective mentors.

The one exception was their strongly articulated views on the very positive value of the LIT. The only input from RITC not mediated through their mentors, the Institute was for the mentees a unique opportunity to begin putting into practice the communication and networking principles learned through their mentorships; to gain exposure to TCR on an international basis; and to increase their self-confidence as professionals through the presentation and defence of their research.

“I went initially not knowing what to expect, but as it progressed, I realized its purpose was to create a new generation of leadership on tobacco”, and so in his case, it was helpful: “I had a chance to make a presentation of my research which gave me self-confidence in speaking. It may seem a small thing, but it helped me a lot”.

The materials/discussion on mentoring as a capacity development process for leadership was significant for several. For at least two, it opened the possibility of their being leaders in their own right, moving them from thinking that “leadership had to do with in-born capacities”, to realizing that “it is possible to learn leadership capacities” both through being mentored and through realizing that workshops like this might be organized and facilitated “by me, back in my own country. Why not?”<sup>23</sup>

For another who was initially concerned he would be junior in his knowledge of research and tobacco control and so left outside of the discussions, in the event was engaged and included, gave a presentation and learned from the diversity: “we learned from each other because not all of the dyads were working on tobacco in the same way”.

One of the mentors reported a similarly critical value for mentees from the Institute, in the case of his mentee with respect to the validity of TCR as a field of professional activity. “The Institute was like a wonderland for (my mentee); a brand new experience, very much broader than anything experienced before”. Because the funding in their country was insufficient either to hold such meetings for young researchers at home or to send them abroad, “for a young specialist, it was a revelation” to see TCR as a “self-standing research field, with such a high level of interest in it and funding for it”.

#### **4/g *Mentor and mentee assessments of networking through the Programme***

Although it was expected that mentors would on their own begin to network, this has not happened. The one exception, albeit limited, have been the exchanges among the three Latin America/Caribbean mentors largely on the basis of their socio-geographic proximity, their natural tendencies to do professional outreach and, to a lesser extent, their participation in the preparation of the LIT. According to one, “we still have skills to share”. That said, the process was generally described in a somewhat random way and

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<sup>23</sup> This quote reflects a difference between leadership, which this mentee had come to feel could be learned through being mentored, and mentorship which most felt was an innate predilection toward being a teacher -- a trait that could be improved through a positive mentoring experience, but probably not easily taught as such (see page 6)



seen by at least one of the group as now having “stalled” due to differences of theoretical approach.

This finding of limited networking was not a surprising one given the distances between most of the mentors; their fairly diverse TCR expertise, experience and opportunities; and, most especially, the lack of any specific tasks or coordinator to catalyze the effort. A *working* network, among people who otherwise would not readily interact, takes time and effort to jump start and keep running; it takes something to network around; and it takes someone to maintain communication channels. While it probably would not have needed RITC to “build in ways to help them develop facilitation skills” given their already existing abilities in this respect, it seems reasonable to expect the mentors would have needed a structure on which to focus the relationship<sup>24</sup>.

*Mentor Perspectives* All agreed that the group as a whole was “not really a network; we had good communication with each other at meetings, but not much in between them”.

“We became friends with one another and that’s meaningful to me, the human aspect, because we can build something from there in terms of research. We now have a base of people that like each other, relate well and have a common language. This could be developed around a joint research project, perhaps...”

Although all agreed the idea of undertaking specific tasks based on exchange of ideas and on a modestly collaborative basis would be worth pursuing, creating a network per se did not seem to be a particularly strong goal of any.

At the same time, many realized the importance of “networking” in the sense of reaching out and exposing ideas and interests to others in the field. According to one, his advice to his mentee at meetings, conferences - including and in the Institute - “is always to mingle; I tell him that you can never do enough of that in terms of building a career”. In his view, there was “not enough” of this type of networking among the RITC group and there should have been more; “we should have pushed harder; especially in Trinidad where the ideas we discussed about leadership were good in terms of creating the basis of a group”.

It was clear, however, any such initiative would probably have to come from RITC rather than one of them. According to one mentor, “some framework would be needed” to make this happen, “more than just the write-board and website. These have helped with communication, but we are so different from one another, they were not enough. To become a network, we would have needed either to have had more commonalities among us or a leader to organize us, but none of us took that role on”.

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<sup>24</sup> Based on comments from the mentors and experience of networks in general, it would probably make most sense to assess the viability and design of a TCR network arrangement separately from the Mentorship Programme. Although a network based on either or both of these themes and the current core participants could well be effective and sustainable, exploring options as to purpose, design, activities and resources as a specific, stand-alone agenda would allow more room to manoeuvre e.g. a wider range of individuals and other funders to opt in or out; creativity in the range of issues addressed; collaboration with other collaborative mechanisms.

*Mentee Perspectives* Networking within their own immediate institutional or research programmes, and in some cases the networks of their mentors, appeared to be the main focus of mentees. However, a couple were beginning to look toward building their own more international connections “in the future”, in large measure based on the communication skills they had gained. For one, “the people skills” he got through mentorship “should help me to do my own networking without necessarily involving (my mentor’s) contacts. I feel comfortable now, optimistic, about networking”.

#### **4/h *Mentor and mentee understanding of mentorship versus leadership***

While the relationship between being a mentor and being a leader might have been a somewhat contentious one for RITC and the CCGHR (at least insofar as focusing the Trinidad Institute), it is not one that appeared to have troubled the mentors or mentees in any way. There was no evidence, for example, that uncertainty or disagreement as to the goals and methods of the Programme with respect to these two aspects of TCR capacity negatively influenced the nature or extent of their participation or the value to them of their involvement.

On the contrary, for all of the dyads interviewed, the two concepts were intimately, interactively and positively linked. Mentoring was understood to be both a means to the end of creating new leaders and, at the same time, an expression of being already a leader but improving one’s performance in that role by enabling future professionals to learn as broadly as possible -- and so potentially themselves to become leaders.

According to one mentee, the purpose of the RITC Programme was clear: to “make leaders of us in TCR; to make us better leaders”<sup>25</sup>. Similarly for one of the mentors, the Programme had made more explicit for him what he knew intuitively: that mentorship could serve as a tool for strengthening his own leadership qualities - “empathy, advocacy and negotiating; these are all part of good leadership”, characteristics that, he believed, evolve through being a good mentor. Another’s comment reflected to a large extent the consensus:

“...leadership is a broader process than mentorship in terms of advancing TCR activities through increasingly stepping them up, of involving more people and spreading your influence as a research advocate. Mentorship is narrower, whether life-long or short-term, in involving communication and learning of individuals. But the two are directly related, and I was not at all surprised that the next step after Buenos Aires on mentoring was on leadership in Trinidad. Behind all the mentorship discussions was the idea of leadership. For advancing TCR overall, leadership is the better word for the process; mentorship is one aspect of that. My goal for my mentees is definitively to make them leaders.”

Another put a somewhat different emphasis on the respective concepts, while still recognizing the complementarity between them:

“...leadership and mentorship share characteristics because to be a good mentor you have to be a good leader, although mentoring requires much more than leadership.

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<sup>25</sup> While it was RITC’s immediate aim to create public Leaders out of the mentors rather than the mentees, this response from one mentee was common also to the rest and should be considered an unexpected and positive outcome.

Leaders go where they want to go, but a mentor has the extra responsibility of helping the mentee get the knowledge and skills that he needs to get. So, the two ideas are not too far apart. Leadership sets you on a direction of what you want to do or to promote, but then as a mentor you think in terms of your mentee also". With respect to doing this within the RITC Programme agenda, "this was not a problem because we took that into account in setting clear learning outcomes and the way we would reach them".

Based on a reading of the files and discussions with RITC, the Mentorship Programme "bottom line" was intended to support tobacco control researchers as mentors who would, through this process, strengthen their own leadership capacities and lay the groundwork for a new generation of leaders. Though two quite different tasks, in this construction mentoring and leading were also closely associated:

- good mentors assumed to have the capacity for leadership insofar as they are able to compel respect and to draw capable protégés and stakeholders to them on the basis of their capacity, profile, status and aura of being a champion; and
- good leaders assumed likely to be good mentors insofar as they have the capacities to collaborate, communicate and catalyze buy-in.

*Based on the mentor/mentee interviews, these were assumptions that seemed generally to be shared by them as well. There was also in their comments, however, a somewhat **subtle distinction between public and private leadership** in noting where leadership and mentorship diverge<sup>26</sup>. A strong public leader may not want, or have capacities, to facilitate responsive one-on-one learning, especially where the mentee sets the agenda to a large extent. At the same time, a good mentor may only see him/herself as a teacher ready and able to lead a mentee by example, but not want, or have the capacities, for more public display. Some, of course -- apparently like those in the Programme, can and want to do both<sup>27</sup>.*

*→ This is an important distinction as a caution for RITC that it needs to be clear as to both its bottom-line goal for the Programme with respect to how it expects to catalyze tobacco policy change (e.g. via mentoring and/or Leadership development); and from there, its selection of agenda, inputs and partner-recipients.*

## **5. Brief analysis of the validity of some Mentorship Programme assumptions**

While not formally cast as assumptions or outcomes, a number of expectations were implied through various files and conversations with RITC about the nature of the

<sup>26</sup> As noted elsewhere in the report, between being a large L Leader and a small l leader.

<sup>27</sup> A further distinction made by one mentor was that not all good TC researchers are necessarily good either as leaders or as mentors, where they lack the capacity and interest to collaborate with peers, share ideas or mobilize outreach to research and policy communities and new learner-leaders; where they are "simply good bench researchers". [As confirmed with emphasis, by RITC, these were not the types people being recruited into the Programme]

Mentorship Programme and what it would do. Following is a very brief assessment of the validity of some of these, based on the mentor/mentee interview data.

→ It matters that the Mentorship Programme is RITC-based, not outsourced.

This question was not asked specifically. However, while there was no sense from the respondents that RITC's management of the Programme as such was a critical condition of success, it clearly has mattered that RITC has had a prominent place in the exercise both because of the range and strength of its connections into the international TCR community, and because of its capacity to implement the Programme in a responsive, tailored and flexible way. Together, these two factors suggest that RITC needs either to continue managing the Programme itself, or to work in conjunction with a like-minded executing agency that can ensure both factors persist.

→ Funding is a necessary condition, not a sufficient one, and should not become so.

This appears to be an accurate reflection of the Programme's experience. Funding was noted by several respondents as necessary for research projects on which the dyads worked in mentorship and for which mentees could take primary responsibility, develop personal learning agendas and bring to closure. At the same time, mentors were equally clear that funding would not have been sufficient for the mentorship to work without also the workshops and connections to people, materials and networking opportunities. While all of the planned and suggested "next steps" (discussed below) assume funds being available, none expected soliciting of these funds to be a key point of departure.

→ Leadership capacity for TCR would be enhanced in low-and middle income countries

This has happened in only a modest way given the small numbers involved, but it has happened on the part of the mentees all of whom, backed up by their respective mentors, said they had changed through the process, most particularly in now having a stronger sense of themselves as potential leaders. Most of the mentors, on the other side, were already leaders in their respective countries<sup>28</sup>. While they expected now to champion mentoring more forcefully as a TCR strategy because of the Programme, only two indicated gaining more self-confidence or capacity to engage with the policy community in promoting TC.

→ Knowledge translation skills of low/middle income country researchers would improve

In four of the cases, mentors and mentees believed that the TCR knowledge and skills being learned through the mentorships had enabled mentees to produce sound research results. These would now, presumably, be available for use by policy-makers, although based on comments from the interviews it was not clear if/how specific actions would be

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<sup>28</sup> The evaluation did not have documented proof of their being capital L leaders as such. The fact of their being at least small L leaders was evident in the tone of the comments made both by the mentors, in presenting themselves, and by the mentees in explaining why they wanted to be their mentees.

taken to “translate” them in policy terms beyond workshop dissemination and/or journal publication. In one case, the research had not gotten far enough off the ground to claim results. In two cases, no interview data were collected.

→ Low/middle income country researchers would increase their ability to support ratification, implementation and evaluation of FCTC.

Only two, a mentor of one dyad and mentee of another, specifically<sup>29</sup> indicated that because of their increased capacity as TC advocates<sup>30</sup> through the Programme they were now better prepared to take action toward implementation of FCTC legal instruments in their respective countries. For the others, it is probably reasonable to assume that the research done by the mentees, the plans being made to disseminate results and the skills being acquired to do this kind of outreach will increase at least the potential of further action on FCTC implementation.

→ The boundary partners of the Programme are the mentors, not the mentees

This position may have been a reasonable strategy on the part of RITC insofar the aim was to broaden the leadership potential of the mentors as the “champions” with whom it wants to maintain a relationship. In fact, however, the Programme has not worked exactly this way.

- All of the mentors talked expressly in terms of the dyad i.e. of themselves and their mentees as an integrated whole;
- Both mentors and mentees defined the relationship as one of mutual responsibility and exchange and made the point that a mentor cannot succeed except in terms of the relationship;
- The greatest impact of the Programme appeared to have been on the mentees, not the mentors; and
- In all cases, the mentors made reference to engaging their current or prospective mentees as part of their projected/recommended “next steps”.

One conclusion to be drawn from this is that, at the micro level, the dyad is in effect the Boundary Partner. A mentor does not succeed or fail independently of the mentee; and neither succeeds or fails independently of the relationship. In this respect, Outcome Mapping plans should be designed and implemented for this relationship, including both mentor and mentee as actors<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> This question of links to FCTC was not specifically asked. These responses were to the more open-ended question of how the mentor/mentee had been changed through the Programme experience; what, if anything, they would/could now do differently.

<sup>30</sup> Based on the interview notes, the respondents did not specifically indicate what they would do differently as researchers as such; the emphasis was more on their outreach skills. This is perhaps an indicator of their having realized more confidence as “knowledge translators”.

<sup>31</sup> One question here would be who manages the OM process: RITC with the dyad; or the dyad itself as one of the requirements of the grant.

This is different, however, from the macro level of the Mentorship Programme as a whole, with RITC as initiator and manager. In this case, while the mentors themselves were appropriately the Boundary Partners, perhaps this designation would have been more appropriately given them not as mentors *per se*, but as prospective public Leaders. This might have more clearly reflected the aim of using the mentorship experience as a means of encouraging and strengthening the individuals in this role. An Outcome Mapping strategy could then have been designed and implemented expressly recognizing this wider goal and what it entailed<sup>32</sup>.

Based on discussions with RITC and the dyads, such a two-tier conceptualization of the Programme was not explicit. On the contrary, it seems that the dyads perceived the aim and action of the exercise to be principally at the micro level, while RITC's end focus was on the macro -- a difference that explains the overall higher "success" marks given the Programme by the dyads than by RITC.

## **6. Mentor and Mentees Ideas Going Forward**

Mentors and mentees were asked for their suggestions for building on the results of the Mentorship Programme with respect to (a) what was needed in their own countries, including actions they hoped/planned to take themselves; and (b) what RITC might do.

Overall, there were few suggestions. However, two main points emerged from the responses: all respondents had fairly clear ideas as to "what next" in terms of themselves, but less clearly for RITC; and while all noted that RITC's continued support to mentorships was important, they saw this best done as complement to, rather than instead of, the wider range of TCR support it provides e.g. small grants, large national studies and broader international research collaborations and networking.

### ***What they were/will be doing themselves***

#### **Mentees**

- One was about to begin a fellowship in TCR in which he would design and implement a TC cessation Programme, a "good end point" for his mentorship for now. However, he and his mentor were anticipating his eventual involvement in another TCR project with the mentor's US-based network colleagues.
- One hoped to start a TCR mentorship with the final year residency students he was teaching. Although he saw himself as "not ready yet", he hoped to get "help from (my mentor), and perhaps from RITC, as well as gaining stronger research skills myself".
- With potential research support from RITC and other donors for her fledgling TCR team, one will try to strengthen through practice her own mentoring capacities in working with incoming team members.

#### **Mentors**

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<sup>32</sup> Making the mentor the boundary partner perhaps explains why the OM did not pick up early on the differences in perception between RITC and the mentors with respect to mentoring as a means versus an end; allowing for the apparent ambiguity around private and public leadership.



- One was beginning another TCR project, funded through a different agency, which will “involve a larger team and so it will be a good chance for me to test my mentorship and leadership capacities further”.
- One will use the funds generated through commissioned research in his institution to initiate a mentoring Programme - something to which RITC could usefully contribute as a value-added collaboration at some point. “We need a continuous effort over the next five years to begin building a base of expertise here through offering fellowships of perhaps \$15k each. This would allow predictability and we could create expectations” in and about the TCR field with “regular public announcements to target university graduates”.
  - o As the profile of the programme is developed over time, it is expected to be easier to find “good mentors and mentees because we will know what to look for in the application process”. In addition, “over time, the mentees can be purposively encouraged to become mentors in their own right, either here or somewhere else” -- a focus that should motivate the potentially good ones and “help winnow out those who do not do well in, or like, this kind of relationship”.
- One will use his newly awarded Leadership grant to begin creating a “TCR path”, drawing in mentees in tandem with those of another TCR grant that already includes this provision. The idea will be “to generate a critical mass” of researchers and “go more deeply with them, pushing them eventually to become mentors”.
- One dyad had not had time to complete the research learning agenda they had set out, because it “reached beyond just the research project supported by RITC”. Over a further year, the aim was to go beyond TCR, “because the (health) profession as a whole needs more research expertise as it moves into evidence-based practice”. It was a nice example of the Programme’s likely having a “halo” effect.
- One will seek to further develop her mentoring skills, especially communication, active listening and negotiating; this in anticipation of when she “will have her own staff to mentor” and her plans to do more outreach “into her institution” and the community more generally. “There is good potential for me to have a strong influence on the community through advocating and negotiating TC issues with NGOs and other groups”.
  - o One possibility she had not yet considered, but thought possible when asked, was of mentoring, or being mentored by, NGO/CBOs<sup>33</sup> -- sharing with them her TCR knowledge and skills, and learning from them how to work with/engage communities in controlling tobacco use. She agreed it would be a good link: “tobacco is not yet among their areas of concern, in fact, many NGOs do not agree with passive smoking legislation. I will continue to try to collaborate with the organizations like the Consumers Foundation, for example...”.
  - o Because she missed the Trinidad Institute, she will also try to capture some of the leadership training through literature searches and exchanges with the other mentors, for both of which RITC support would be valuable.

### ***What RITC might do***

Coming chiefly from the mentors, there was a general consensus that, in some form, it would be important for RITC not to lose the momentum of the current Programme and contact with the current mentors; and that it should try to find ways of keeping the

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<sup>33</sup> [Community-based organizations](#)

admittedly still-embryonic mentor-mentor linkages going. Reflecting the general view of all, the point was made by one mentor that

“support to mentoring should continue because research support is not enough, because it moves one-by-one. You need to reach out in order to create a critical mass and mentorship does that by a domino effect: as people graduate they ask ‘what next’ and from this, there are many opportunities to create mentees”.

From the least to the most intense type of action, suggestions included:

- extending e-mentoring on or around the web-site;
- facilitating sharing, exchange and/or joint assessments across some of the local initiatives;
- creating a specifically mentorship-focused small grants programme or joint inter-country research project; and
- providing collaborative funding for TCR mentorship programmes in one or more of the participating institutions.

Building on these and the analysis of the Mentorship Programme more generally, the discussion of the interviews began to revolve around three potential programming themes as the most viable for consideration. All were based on the idea of building up the TCR base through *creating, extending and using mentoring systems* in some way.

- Institutionalize within RITC the “mentorship capabilities, enthusiasm and experience” that have been developed through the Programme by allowing the mentors, and perhaps some of the mentees, to serve it as a mentor resource group. On an as-needed basis, both current and eventually new members of the group would make themselves available to orient individuals or groups to TCR; review grant proposals; mentor novice researchers. According to one mentor in suggesting such a formation, he would like to do it “not because I have nothing else to do, but because it would be interesting professionally to use my mentoring skills in this way”.
- Enhance mentorship capacity on a regional basis through creating specifically tailored mentoring-of-mentors programmes. Built generally around the current model and mentors, and where appropriate the mentees, these would gradually expand into broader networks of mentor resource persons. All of the mentors referred in some way to their own near/medium-term plans to establish an outreach programme such as this in conjunction with their own institutions and others with which they networked. These would be the core of a programme focused on priority TCR issues and to which RITC support would add value, allowing for more ambitious reach and scope. Costs would be shared depending on respective programme capacities and priorities. According to one mentor, “by



using us to train other mentors, over the next 5-10 years, step by step, we could create a TC research path in at least some countries of each region”<sup>34</sup>.

- Consolidate the enhanced research and mentoring capacities of those mentors and mentees involved in the current Programme by developing a single global research project in which all would participate. Implemented in their respective countries/regions, the umbrella would be a shared research question/issue involving one comprehensive data set, jointly analyzed, interpreted and globally disseminated -- but with results also tailored to local context-specific action. According to one mentor, “I think we are mature enough as a group to do such a joint project. There are differences between us in experience and expertise, but these could be overcome with the professional skills we would bring to a common long-term study, as the ‘intellectual centre’ for overall management”. Again, according to most mentors, it would be important to “include a sub-component involving new mentees and with specific terms of reference aimed at increasing their research capacities”, allowing the project to serve also as a capacity development mechanism.

***Lessons learned from the mentors/mentees*** All of these ideas were discussed in very notional terms; the most concrete suggestion from all was that RITC open a discussion with them as to options. In determining the focus of any next step, however, two broad lessons were inferred from the interviews.

It is important to be transparent as to the main priorities and expected outcomes when deciding/applying criteria for participant selection, designing inputs/activities and determining monitoring benchmarks; but equally to be flexible as dyads grow into their own relationships, or fail to do so, and as they interact with RITC. → It was clear from the interviews that the Programme worked as well as it did, that mentors had no problem moving with and within the agenda, because they felt confident as to what the exercise was about, saw it as consistent with their own priorities and those of their mentees, and considered it open to their input i.e. each mentor felt ownership of the his/her mentorship agenda.

There is value in working through a framework that combines the concepts of mentorship and leadership in an interactive way, of promoting leadership through mentorship and vice-versa. Both mentors and mentees saw these as inseparable dimensions of the same processes of learning, communicating and collaborating toward a shared end, albeit with different emphases at different times; for different people; and with a nuanced definition of public versus private leadership. → Working with both ideas in an iterative way appears to have allowed all participants, e.g. those emphasizing their role as mentor and those emphasizing their role as leader, to find a place in the Programme based on

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<sup>34</sup> The mentor was not asked to define precisely the meaning of “research path”, but the sense from the discussion was of creating some form of critical mass of people able to mentor TC research capacity on a permanent basis. If a programme were to be developed, it would presumably be necessary to operationally define what this path would look like and how it would be maintained.

their own capacities, priorities and contexts while continuing to feel comfortable with the whole.

## 7. Concluding Comments

The preceding sections of the review concerned the perspectives of mentors and mentees as to both what the Mentorship Programme meant for them and their ideas on potential next steps. This last section reflects the perspective of the review itself, aimed at providing input to RITC in considering a possible 3-year TCR Mentorship Programme.

### a] Pursuing the original leadership-through-mentorship concept

One key factor in the success of any project is clarity and agreement on the goals by all participants, outcomes likely to be better for everyone where they share a reasonably clear and agreed understanding of the purposes of the initiative. The Mentorship Programme presents something of a variation on this theme insofar as, while both RITC and the mentors as a group<sup>35</sup> appeared quite clear in their own minds as to the goal of the Programme, their respective definitions of that goal differed, as did, it seems, their understanding of what references to “leadership” implied in that context. Based on interview comments:

Mentors perceived the task as one of *building up a local base of TCR professional capacity by implementing successful mentorships*: with financial and technical input from RITC and the CCGHR, they were to select and guide mentees onto a professional TCR path. Complementary to this, mentors noted the consistency between their desire to mentor young professionals and their perception of themselves as *private leaders*, both roles involving bringing along the next generation through sensitive communication, responsive interaction, positive role modelling and introductions to wider networks and new ideas. The fact that all of these mentors also saw their mentoring as consistent with their *public leadership* role, though no doubt an important reinforcing condition, did not seem to be the defining one.

RITC, on the other hand, perceived the task as one expressly of *developing the public leadership capacity* of these TC researchers -- honing their skills as mentors in the expectation that they would go on from there to strengthen their public leadership knowledge and skills in the other areas of knowledge generation and translation related to the 3-circles of research, researchers and the research environment.

Both goals, in fact, probably *could* have been realized insofar as the differences were more of degree than of kind; RITC's expectations included those of the mentors, but then went beyond them. The fact that this did not happen appeared largely to be a matter, not of the logic of the strategy, but of the scope of the design.

The Programme succeeded from the perspective of the *mentorship component* because of good internal congruence: the task was relevant to mentor priorities; the inputs were appropriate to realizing the intended mentee-development objective; and, with the

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<sup>35</sup> As RITC's boundary partners, only the mentors are considered in this last section, not mentees.

finalization of the mentee research projects and their inclusion in the LIT, reasonable closure was achieved.

The Programme was less successful from the perspective of the *public leadership component* because of limited internal congruence: the expected shift from mentorship to leadership as a specific goal and area of activity was not made explicit enough to establish it in participants' minds as the Programme's second-stage agenda. The LIT Leadership discussions were seen as interesting and important, but not as the beginning of a new dimension or stage of activity, especially since no follow on action was initiated to consolidate and extend that learning.

In this sense, the Leadership stage of the Mentorship Programme did not really get started. This should not necessarily be read as a negative conclusion, however. The Programme was expressly intended to be a *pilot*, to test both a strategy for TCR Leadership development and a design for its application. As a pilot, three conclusions can be drawn at this stage:

- With respect to the validity of the strategy → The use of mentorship as a means of fostering a new generation of TC researchers and potential leaders appears to be sound; however, its effectiveness as a first step to catalyzing the development of mentors as leaders in the public sphere, as defined by the three leadership circles, is uncertain because this second part of the work remains incomplete.
- With respect to the appropriateness of the design → The process fell short because, as suggested above, too much was assumed with respect to mentors being clear that there was a two-part agenda; and the action was overly truncated, stopping short of putting in place a full resources needed to enable the second part to happen.
- With respect to a potential 3-year Mentorship Programme → The original concept *could still be viable* were the broader goal and its two-stage agenda made clear to prospective mentors from the outset; were mentors explicitly to agree to the approach as appropriate and relevant to them (some, for example, may feel other aspects of the 3-circles are more important for them in developing public leadership capacities); and were sufficient and specific support to be provided for improving and applying both mentorship knowledge and skills and public Leadership action.

In terms of the current Programme, this would imply revivifying the process: to explore the level of interest in public leadership capacity development on the part of some/all of the present mentors; to clarify/agree with them the specific expected outcomes of such an initiative, from both RITC's and their perspectives; and to determine the resource inputs, activities and timelines that would be needed to realize these outcomes.

It would be important to go through this full exploration and planning process both to confirm this as something the mentors wanted to pursue, since none of them actually raised public leadership skills as a particular gap or priority for them; and to sort through the highly variable options of the remaining two circles, since unlike the mentoring arrangements which were generally the same for all mentors, those for enabling leadership-oriented action and learning are likely to be quite different based on mentors' different starting capacities, priorities and contexts.

## **b] Sustainable capacity development for TCR**

As suggested above, from the perspective of RITC's overall goal of promoting and enabling TCR commitment and capacity, there was nothing in the review data to suggest not building on the momentum of the current Programme in terms of the *public leadership development* goal.

Nor, however, was there anything to suggest that the mentoring component itself should end. In fact, from the perspective of mentors' interest and RITC's mandate to create a sustainable critical mass of TCR capacity in developing countries, following up on suggestions like that of one mentor to create what he called sustainable "TCR paths" would make particular sense.

- Supporting the development of reasonably long-term (2-3 year) mentoring programmes in one or more of the current Programme countries, tailored to each specific context, would build on the enhanced confidence, expertise and momentum of the mentors.
- Providing them seed funding to plan, generate and monitor mentorship-managed research projects for successive rounds of mentor-mentee dyads on a relatively predictable basis, would enable evolving viable selection and funding criteria, seeking out other funding partners, promoting new priorities and ideas and following up dyad "graduates" to explore networking opportunities.

In this context and in terms of the RITC mandate<sup>36</sup>, support to the idea of an on-going series of annual mentorship grants for different rounds of mentor-mentee dyads would appear to be less appropriate and probably not cost-effective.

A programme based simply on an application "solicitation and review" process would more likely generate a collection of geographically scattered contacts than the kind of consistently competent and reliable cohort of TCR mentors and mentees with whom RITC could partner in building viable national/regional bases of TCR activity.

At the same time, the level of attention needed to enable such a training series to produce a reasonable level of mentoring capacity capable of sustaining the process and eventually institutionalizing a solid TCR base would be considerable, and come with a relatively high degree of risk in terms of getting it right. It would involve setting up a transparent and sound system for identifying, selecting and monitoring appropriate mentors in each region; for guiding these mentors in the selection of their mentees; and for ensuring the design, application and dissemination into action of appropriate research projects.

Logic would suggest such a selection-management-monitoring system, to be sustainable and cost-effective, would be better built around RITC's known core of research mentors, through the kind of country-based programme described above.

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<sup>36</sup> As opposed to the equally legitimate, but very different, mandate of sustaining a TCR training programme in Canada.